

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 8350

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GEISEL'S ADDRESS TO ARENA CONVENTION

REF: BRASILIA 8329

BEGIN SUMMARY: LARGELY ON EXHORTATION AIMED AT UNITING AND ANIMATING THE PARTY, THE PRESIDENT'S BRIEF SPEECH SEPTEMBER 21 AT CLOSING SESSION OF ARENA CONVENTION RAISED THE EVER-PRESENT ISSUES OF CORRUPTION AND SUBVERSION, SAYING THAT IF THE COURTS WERE IMPROVED, INSTITUTIONAL ACT 5 WOULD NO LONGER BE NEEDED TO PUNISH CORRUPTION, AND THAT CONTINUED VIGILANCE IS NEEDED AGAINST SUBVERSION. GEISEL IDENTIFIED THE PARTY'S PROGRAM WITH THE AIMS OF THE REVOLUTION. HE STRESSED THAT ARENA, DESPITE 1974 SLIPPAGE, HAD WON ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN PROPORTIONAL BALLOTING AND NOW HAS FOUR-TO-ONE EDGE OVER RURAL MDB IN MEMBERSHIP. HE CONCLUDED THAT THE DOOMSAYERS WHO HAVE PREDICTED ARENA LOSSES IN 1976 AND 1978 MUNICIPAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS CAN BE PROVEN WRONG. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT GEISEL'S SPEECH TO THE DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF ARENA WAS LARGELY EXHORTATORY, WITH AIM OF INSPIRING UNITY, GREATER EFFORT AND IMPROVED MORALE.

2. DEALING WITH SPECIFIC POLITICAL ISSUES OF CORRUPTION AND SUBVERSION, GEISEL SAID THAT THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION, THROUGHOUT

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THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD, HAS REDUCED THE NUMBER OF SERIOUS

CASES. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT MANY CASES WERE NEVER PUNISHED PROPERLY BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE EVIDENCE. GEISEL PROMISED TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND HOPED "THAT OUR ARCHAIC JUDICIAL MECHANISM, RECOGNIZED AS SLOW AND INEFFICIENT. . . WILL BE PERFECTED FINALLY, WITH THE COLLABORATION OF THE THREE POWERS OF THE REPUBLIC, SO THAT THE TYPE OF SANCTIONS SUITED TO THESE CRIMES CAN BE ESTABLISHED, THUS AVOIDING THE USE OF EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES, WHICH UNFORTUNATELY ARE NOW THE ONLY EFFECTIVE MEANS."

3. SAYING THAT THE RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUBVERSION ARE INDEISPUTABLE, GEISEL WARNED THAT "THE ADVERSARY IS NEUTRALIZED, BUT NOT DESTROYED. IT IS CONTINUOUSLY RENOURISHING ITSELF . . . REQUIRING ANTICIPATED, PERSISTENT PREVENTIVE, AND EVEN RESPRESSIVE, ACTION TO MAINTAIN THE CLIMATE OF ORDER AND WORK WHICH IS INDISPENSABLE TO OUR DEVELOPMENT." HE ADDED THAT REVOLUTION'S INITIAL CONCEPT WHICH STRESSED THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CORRUPTION AND SUBVERSION HAD EVOLVED INTO A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE DOCTRINE OF "DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY", WHICH NOW GUIDES THE GOVERNMENT.

4. HE PRAISED ARENA'S PLATFORM AS CONSECRATING THIS DOCTRINE, WHICH HE HIMSELF HAD ESPOUSED. GEISEL SALUED THE PARTY PROGRAM AS A GIANT STEP, IN "THE AFFIRMATION THAT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF DEMOCRACY HAS AN ULTIMATE END THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FREE, JUST, SOVEREIGN AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIETY."

5. THE MAJOR PART OF GEISEL'S SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO A CALL FOR PARTY UNITY AND PARTY ACTION. GEISEL URGED THAT PERSONAL INTERESTS AND VANITIES SHOULD BE SACRIFICED IN THE INTEREST OF STRENGTHENING OF THE PARTY. GEISEL SAID THAT ARENA IS NOT A DEMAGOGIC PARTY, MAKING UNKEPT PROMISES, BUT RATHER THE PARTY THAT HAS SHOWN SUCH ACTION, TAKING OVER IN THE MIDST OF THE STAGNATION AND MISERY THAT THE REVOLUTION INHERITED, INCLUDING IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL JUSTICE. THE PARTY'S PROGRAM, HE WENT ON, IS A PROMISE TO THE PEOPLE AND TO THE FUTURE OF THE NATION. SPECIFICALLY CITING YOUNG PEOPLE, GEISEL SAID "IT IS TO THE YOUTH. . . THAT WE WANT TO PRESENT VALID AND WELL-DRAWN ALTERNATIVES. . . WITH A VIEW TO RECONCILING ORDER AND PROGRESS, MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT WITH INDISPENSABLE

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SECURITY, THE MOST LIBERAL AMPLITUDE OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS WITH THE IRREDUCIBLE LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NATION AS A WHOLE. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS."

6. SUMMING UP, GEISEL CALLED FOR THE PARTY TO GET OUT THE VOTE AND TO REFUTE THE "NEGATIVISTS WHO SPEAK OF A PARTY CRISIS, OR OF OPPOSITION VICTORIES AS CERTAIN, OR WHO ENGAGE IN PARTISAN AND IRRESPONSIBLE CRITICISM." GEISEL POINED OUT

THAT ARENA HAS RECEIVED AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE PROPORTIONAL VOTING OF 1974 AND THAT ARENA HAS RUN UP FOUR TIMES THE MEMBERS THAT THE MDB HAD IN 1975 AND PREDICTED THAT, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND ALL THE STATE GOVERNMENTS, ARENA WOULD WIN ITS BATTLES IN 1976 AND 1978.

7. COMMENT: ABOVE ALL, GEISEL'S SPEECH WAS A PEP TALK FOR A PARTY THAT HAS BEEN DISPIRITED BY ELECTORAL LOSSES IN 1974 INTERNAL RIVALRIES, AND RECENT CONCERN THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO IT MIGHT BE DECLINING. GEISEL PROVIDED A TONIC BY RESTATING CLEARLY THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE REVOLUTION WITH ARENA. HIS BRIEF REFERENCE TO SUPPORT FOR ARENA AT STATE LEVEL WAS A REMINDER TO SOME DISAFFECTED STATE GOVERNORS THAT GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO ARENA EXTENDS DOWN THE PYRAMID. HE SOUGHT TO OVERCOME DEFEATISM BY PLAYING UP THE IMPORTANT ELECTORAL ADVANTAGES ARENA ENJOYS, MANY OF THEM THROUGH ITS LINKS TO THE GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME HE APPEARED TO BE CALLING ON THE PARTY TO TAKE ON SOME OF THE BURDEN NOW CARRIED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF DEVELOPING AND CARRYING OUT THE SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES CALLED FOR BY THE REVOLUTION. WHILE THIS APPROACH IS GENERALLY VIEWED AS AN EFFORT TO ENHANCE THE PARTY'S AUTONOMY AND PRESTIGE, SOME SKEPTICAL OBSERVERS SEE IN IT AN ATTEMPT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE ARENA MORE OF A BUFFER BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNMENT ON ONE HAND AND PUBLIC OPINION ON THE OTHER. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, HOWEVER, OFFERED LITTLE BASIS FOR HOPE FOR FURTHER LIBERALIZATION, AND CONTAINED NOTHING THAT MIGHT ALARM HARDLINE OPPONENTS OF "DISTENSAO." HE MADE CLEAR THAT THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SUBVERSION WILL CONTINUE TO BE WAGED WITH THE SAME HIGH PRIORITY AND TACTICS AS BEFORE. WHILE HE HELD OUT THE PROSPECT OF ABANDONING EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES AGAINST CORRUPTION-- IF THE COURTS COULD BE

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REMODELED TO SHOW GREATER VIGOR AND PROMPTNESS--NOTHING IN HIS COMMENTS SUGGESTED UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS HE MIGHT WAIVE EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES IN DEALING WITH SUBVERSION.

8. FINALLY, GEISEL ADDRESSED ARENA AS THE GOVERNMENT'S PERMANENT POLITICAL PARTNER THAT WILL ACCOMPANY IT INTO THE 1978 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AND BEYOND, WITH NO HINT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ARENA MIGHT BE TRANSITORY OR CONDITIONAL. OF POSSIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO LIBERAL SECTORS WAS ASSUMPTION IMPLICIT THROUGHOUT GEISEL'S SPEECH THAT 1976 AND 1978 ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AS SCHEDULED AND THAT EXISTING GROUND RULES FOR THEM WOULD NOT BE RADICALLY CHANGED. THE CURRENTLY BUBBLING SPECULATION ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE PARTY SYSTEM WAS TOTALLY IGNORED. IN SUM, OVERALL IMPRESSION IS THAT PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS--INDEED MERE FACT

OF HIS APPEARANCE AT CONGRESS-- HAS HAD THE INTENDED TONIC
EFFECT ON THE POLITICAL PROS OF ARENA, IF NOT ON THE MANY
BRAZILIANS WHO HOPED SPEECH MIGHT SIGNAL AT LEAST PARTIAL
RESUMPTION OF DISTENSION POLICIES. END COMMENT.
JOHNSON

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